

Cross Tours & Exploration Inc.

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Raymond R. Greene M. D.
375 East 200 North
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Dr. Greene:

I have been asked by one of your friends and associates, Mr. Ed McLaughlin of your city, to contribute to your research on railroading in the Heber Valley, some of the information that I have gathered during the preparation of material for a catalogue of Utah railroads.

I have prepared the enclosed material covering a goodly portion of the known history of your immediate area and hope that it will be of some value to you in your efforts.

This paper does not contain the details of the Wasatch Mountain Railway because I do not have them, except for a few news clippings. If you have the time, I would appreciate details of organization, equipment and future plans of the road. I would also appreciate any photo's that you might permit to be used in preparing my book. Credits will be given.

The mileages on the Union Pacific's Keetley and Mayflower extensions are not known, but should be readily available to you folks up there.

Best of success to you in your endeavors, and if I can be of any further assistance, please advise me.

Sincerely,

John L. Cross
John L. Cross, President

JLC:jlc

cc: Mr. Edward McLaughlin

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Railroading History in Heber Valley

Heber or Provo Valley as it was originally called, was first eyed as a potential rail center just one-hundred years ago. Long before the Denver & Rio Grande Western Railroad had run its branch from Provo to Heber, far sighted and enterprising railroad men envisioned ribbons of steel binding the strategic Salt Lake City-Ogden, Utah outlets with Northwestern Colorado and with Southwestern Wyoming. The Plan would by-pass the Union Pacific Railroad and would, at the same time tap the commerce of the fertile agriculture and ranch lands of the Heber Valley and the Uintah Basin.

Some of the schemes would bring their roads to Utah's borders, the continuing construction and routing to be handled at a later date. Other roads, planned within the state, hoped to connect with established roads in the neighboring states once the state line had been reached. Some roads planned near-nationwide routes with well known and established roads to form another "Pacific" Railway.

Regardless of what else was incorporated into the schemes and routing of these trans-Utah roads, most of them planned spurs, branches or extensions that would serve Heber; Park City Mining district; the Summit and Carbon Coal fields and Utah Valley.

For one reason or another, mostly either of financing or the complications of right-of-ways over Indian lands, all of the plans were doomed to failure.

The earliest road planned through Heber Valley was the original Utah and Colorado Railroad Company which was organized in 1872 and about which, comparatively little is known other than that its planned objective was the Utah-Colorado border by way of the Heber Valley and the Uintah Basin. Seventeen years later, at the time of reorganization of the Denver and Rio Grande Western the name was revived and suggested as appropriate for the new corporation. However, the name was rejected in favor of the shortened, Rio Grande Western Railroad.

In 1890, with a franchise from the Salt Lake and Eastern Railroad, the Utah Central Railway stated an intention of building a 176 mile road that would carry over Wolf Creek Pass into the Uintah Basin. Work, that was actually completed on this line, included a total of 7.5 miles of track laid; 17 miles of grade toward Park City and the grade from Woodland to Hailstone, graded and tied. By 1903 the company was in financial difficulty, went broke, and went into receivership the same year.

As early as 1896, the Denver & Rio Grande Western had taken an interest in this line and in 1897 the line was reorganized as the Utah Central Railway (No. 2) and the track was completed as far as Park City. The Denver and Rio Grande Western moved at this time, toward completing the road to the Colorado border and both survey and grading parties had been busy on that phase of the work since 1896.

Another road, with mixed Utah and Colorado financial interests, the Utah Midland Railroad was incorporated in March of 1896 to construct through the same area, and was, along with the organization, about the same time, of several other roads with the same or similar objectives, the cause for the Denver and Rio Grande Western's flurry and action.

Before the year was out both survey and grading had been accomplished south-east of Heber City. The route plan for this road included a connection with the Colorado Midland Railroad at the Utah-Colorado border thus forming a more direct route to Salt Lake City than was now possible from Grande Junction, Colorado on the Denver and Rio Grande Western or from Evanston, Wyoming on the Union Pacific road. Again, an added advantage of such a road would be the commerce of the Heber Valley and the Uintah Basin that could be carried. Upon the failure of this railroad, the Denver & Rio Grande Western took over in an effort to push it through to completion.

While competition was going on between these two roads another, the Colorado Western Railroad Company filed articles of incorporation in Denver, in 1894 with a plan to bring a road west to the border of Utah. It would cross into Utah and by an indefinite route, would reach and follow up the Duchesne River, the Strawberry River then down Daniel Creek and the Provo River to Provo, Utah. One of the branches planned on this road, would leave the confluence of Daniel Creek and the Provo River, go west into the City of Heber, then continue to Provo, Utah.

A fourth road, organized in 1894 eyeing prospects through the area, was the Colorado, Wyoming and Great Northern Railroad Company. Their plan was to enter Utah Territory at the same point that the White River enters the state. The route would follow the White River to its confluence with the Green River, follow up the Green River, crossing over the Wyoming border into the City of Green River, Wyoming. Two of the proposed branches to this road included plans for Heber Valley. One would follow up the Duchesne and Strawberry Rivers, down Daniel Creek and the Provo River to Provo, Utah, duplicating the proposed route of the Colorado Western Railroad and the second Branch would take off from the first at the mouth of Daniel Creek, run upstream along the Provo River to Heber and then run to Park City tapping that mining District.

The Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad received a franchise to build a branch line from Provo, Utah to Heber in March of 1897 which proved to be the first plan to materialize in this area providing benefits to Heber Valley.

Sometime previously, the Utah Eastern Railway Co., building a road from Coalville to Park City, Utah, must have extended its road from Park City through Heber and into the vicinity of Upper Falls in Provo Canyon either by their own construction or by purchase from one of the previously named defunct roads, as the records of the Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad Company indicate that the Provo Canyon Branch was built standard-gauge in 1899 and that the upper 15 miles (which would be that portion from Upper Falls to Heber) was purchased from the Utah Eastern Railway Company. This riddle remains to be solved. Eleven miles of this latter section was relocated in 1940.

Original construction commenced at the south end of "J" Street, now called University Avenue, at what was Provo's original railroad depot. The tracks ran north along Second West Street to the mouth of Provo Canyon. A steel bridge carried the tracks to the north side of the river at Olmstead, from which point they followed the canyon floor, crossing the river several times, before reaching Heber City.

The total rise in elevation on this road was 1047 feet between Provo and Heber Cities, or an average of about 37.36 feet to the mile. The points of greatest rise were 116 feet in 1.19 miles between Upper Falls and Vivian Park and 172 feet in 1.71 miles

between Charleston and the end-of-the-line on the 1940 relocation.

Early records report the length of this road was 25.8 miles, 17 of which were in Wasatch County. There were seven stations along the route including: Smoot, 1 mile from Provo Station; Crahurst, 6 miles; Nunn's, 9 miles; Fall, 10 miles; Forks, 12 miles; Wallsburg, 18 miles and Charleston, 21 miles. However, records after the 1940 relocation indicate the total length of the road to the end of the track in Heber City as 28.05 miles with the following stations and mileages: Smoot, 1.10 miles from Provo; Provo Brick Works, 2.14 miles; Hale, 5.85 miles; Olmstead 6.40 miles; Nunn's, 9.29 miles; Upper Falls 10.62 miles; Vivian Park, 11.81 miles; Wallsburg 17.18 miles; Charleston 24.18 miles and Heber 27.78 miles.

The first train carrying passengers from Provo to Wasatch County, arrived at Charleston Station at 2:00 pm on September 6, 1899. It consisted of a 2-6-0 locomotive with tender: six passenger cars loaded with "free-riders" who were eager for the honor of having been among the first to travel by rail from Provo to Wasatch County; and a caboose.

The first train to arrive in Heber having "come all the way through," arrived on September 29, 1899. Time schedules established following this event, announced two trains running daily between Provo and Heber and travel time between the two points took about two hours causing the road, before many trips, to be called the "Heber Creeper." Travel from Heber to Salt Lake City via Provo Station was about three hours.

The official celebration of opening of the road commenced at 3:00 pm on October 6, 1899 at Heber. A special ceremony involving many dignitaries, both railroad and civic, were on hand for the occasion as were some 400 passengers who had traveled from Utah County towns and Salt Lake City aboard the seven car train. A program of speeches and music was followed by a luncheon and a dance. The train left for its return trip shortly after 10:00 pm the same evening.

In 1961, traffic on this road had dwindled to one trip each week and on June 9, 1971, the road was taken out of service. By October of 1971 the tracks were being torn up between Provo and Olmstead. Another page in Utah's railroad history was written to a finish.

The year 1916 found the Rio Grande Western involved in an effort to build a road through the Uintah Basin to the Colorado Border as an extension of the Provo-Heber Branch. This effort was without success.

In 1920 another railroad was organized in Denver, Colorado to build a road that would extend eastward from Salt Lake City through Heber Valley and the Uintah Basin. It was called the Salt Lake and Denver Railroad and its routing planned a tie-up with the Denver and Salt Lake Railroad building westward toward Utah from Denver. The latter road however, ran into financial difficulty and had to terminate at Craig, Colorado. This road, "The Moffat Line," had been pushing west over and through the Rockies in an effort to reach Utah and just as the greatest obstacles, construction wise, including the Moffat Tunnel, had been completed they were forced to halt the construction. A vigorous campaign for additional finance proved fruitless and with this died all the dreams of a Central Utah route traveling east and west. The Denver and Salt Lake was indeed a railroad to nowhere.

In 1922, the Union Pacific Railroad announced plans to extend their Park City road to Keetley, Utah, a distance of about miles at a cost of \$400,000.00. It was finished in 1923. Haulage was to be ore from the Keetley mine. This road was again extended for haulage to the Mayflower mine in 1941 making a total of miles of track from Park City to the Mayflower property.

With the railroads moving ever closer to oblivion, it appeared that this part of the American way-of-life was doomed in the Heber Valley, but a few businessmen and railroad buffs have turned another page in the "Valley's" railroading history with the formation of the Wasatch Mountain Railway and Development Co., a steam powered tourist line, extending from Heber to Bridal Veil Falls in Provo Canyon, utilizing a portion of the Provo-Heber Branch trackage.

